

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSM-03 ACDA-07 IO-13 EUR-12 CIAE-00  
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W  
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R 281554Z MAR 77  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2426  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
DIA WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2039

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, LE  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN EDITORIALS STRONGLY CRITICIZE LEBANESE RIGHTISTS  
OPPOSING RESTRUCTURING LEBANESE ARMY

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SYRIAN MEDIA BROKE ITS LONG SILENCE OVER RIGHTIST  
ACTIVITY IN SOUTH LEBANON AND RIGHT WING OPPOSITION TO  
SARKIS' PLAN TO OVERHAUL AND REBUILD LEBANESE ARMY.  
IN TWO FRONT PAGE EDITORIALS MARCH 27-28, SENIOR AL-BAATH  
COLUMNIST AMID AL-KHULI IMPLICITLY DIRECTED STRONG CRITICISM  
AGAINST KFUR FRONT LEADERS AND RIGHTWING MILITARY ACTIVITY  
IN SOUTH LEBANON. IN COLUMNS ENTITLED "BARTERING REFUSED IN  
THE LEBANESE AND ARAB CONTEXT" AND "REBUILDING OF THE  
LEBANESE ARMY MOST URGENT TASK TO END MILITARY VACUUM IN THE  
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SOUTH." KHULI MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: SOUTH LEBANON  
ALONE REMAINS OUTSIDE THE PURVIEW OF ADF FORCES AND ITS  
INSTABILITY THREATENS TO THRUST LEBANON BACK INTO CHAOS.  
ONLY THE LEBANESE ARMY HAS THE LEGITIMATE AND  
CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESTORATION OF  
ORDER IN THE SOUTH UNDER THE TERMS OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT.  
THUS, PRESIDENT SARKIS' MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY IS

REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY INCLUDING ITS COMMANDER, COMMAND STRUCTURE AND UNITS. HE IS FULLY BACKED BY SYRIA IN THIS BUT THE PERIOD FOR EXERCISING HIS CONSTITUTIONALLY MANDATED EXTRAORDINARY POWERS IS RUNNING OUT. SOME ELEMENTS (READ RIGHTWING LEADERSHIP) ARE USING "CHEAP BARTERING TACTICS AND BLACKMAIL" FOR THEIR OWN NARROW INTERESTS WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT WITH LEBANON'S INTERESTS. THEY EXPLOITING SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON FOR THEIR OWN ENDS AND THIS CONSTITUTES INTOLERABLE RESTRICTION ON CONSTITUTIONAL PREROGATIVES OF LEBANESE PRESIDENT TO REBUILD THE ARMY. THESE PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST OPPOSING SARKIS BUT THE ENTIRE LEBANESE NATION. "NO ONE WILL BE ALLOWED TO JEOPARDIZE OR OBSTRUCT THE PROGRESS OF PEACE IN LEBANON. PRESIDENT SARKIS ENJOYS THE SUPPORT OF THE LEBANESE MASSES AND THE ARAB NATION IN HIS ENDEAVORS." END UNCLASSIFIED

BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

3. FOR SEVERAL WEEKS REPORTS HAVE INDICATED SYRIANS BECOMING APPREHENSIVE ABOUT RIGHTWING OFFENSIVE IN SOUTH LEST IT LEAD TO ROUT OF PLO FORCES AND DE FACTO ISRAELI CONTROL OF ENTIRE SOUTH. IN ADDITION, SYRIANS ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO REBUILDING EFFECTIVE LEBANESE ARMY WHICH COULD RELIEVE SYRIA OF MAINTAINING LARGE FORCE IN LEBANON AND SPARE IT FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT AT ITS INABILITY TO MOVE FURTHER INTO THE SOUTH. PREVIOUSLY SYRIANS HAVE REGARDED RADICAL LEFT AS ITS GREATEST ENEMY IN LEBANON, BUT AFTER ITS SUCCESS IN

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ROUTING REJECTIONIST FORCES IN NABATIYYA AND AFTER REMOVAL OF JUMBLATT FROM THE SCENE, (WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE) SYRIA MAY BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO FOCUS MORE ATTENTION ON THE HARDLINE MARONITE RIGHT. THESE EDITORIALS HAVE PUT KFUR LEADERSHIP ON NOTICE THAT SYRIA WILL NOT VIEW WITH EQUANIMITY FURTHER OPPOSITION TO REMOVAL HANNA SAID AND OTHER LEBANESE OFFICERS WHOM SARKIS BELIEVES TO BE COMPROMISED BY THEIR ACTIONS DURING THE CIVIL WAR AND WHOSE LOYALTY TO THE PRESIDENCY IS BELIEVED TO BE IN DOUBT.

MURPHY

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NNN



## Message Attributes

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